Dear Parents,

The start of a new school year is days away, and I’m so excited to meet you and your child. Recently, I’ve been learning about the positive impact that strong home-school partnerships have on student success. I see us both as co-educators working together toward a common goal.

Here are five things that are on my mind as we start our work together.

1. **Let’s be open, honest, and nonjudgmental.** Tell me about your child—all about your child. What are they passionate about? What triggers frustration or withdrawal? What are your hopes and dreams for them? You are your child’s first teacher, and you know them best.

   I also want to hear about your family. Who makes up your family? What does your family do outside of school? What is your child’s experience after dismissal? I may only be with your child from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., but envisioning your family outside of the classroom helps me approach him or her as a whole person.

2. **Every parent/caregiver is engaged in their child’s learning.** While this may look different from family to family, I have yet to meet a parent/caregiver that isn’t invested in the success of their child. You do not need to be head of the PTA or be at school frequently to be engaged. Whether you’re working in an office, at home, or managing home life, you are busy.

   *Research shows that meaningful family engagement correlates with student success.* I know that you want to help your child learn. Let me show you how to feel comfortable and confident doing so. I can show you how to help your child with his or her math homework, or how to look for appropriate books at the library. I want you to feel empowered with the tools necessary to support your child’s learning.

3. **This year is also about YOU.** What do you need from me this year? Do you need frequent parent/teacher communication? The positive emails as well as the “your child did something less than ideal” emails? Do you need to see that I have books that challenge your child and also reflect who they are? I would love for you to communicate with me in good times and in bad. When you’re happy, your child is happy, and when your child is happy, they’re more likely to be learning. Let me know what you need in order to feel connected to me and school. Don’t be shy.
4. **It’s impossible to be objective about your own child.** After all, this is your baby we’re talking about. You have navigated the perils of infancy and childhood up until this point, and that alone is pretty incredible!

It is perfectly understandable that you will not always be level-headed. I get it. I have two children of my own. As a teacher and a mom, I see this play out on a daily basis. Despite the fact that my children sometimes drive me crazy, they’re still utterly perfect, right? Parenting brings out the irrational side in all of us.

5. **I am going to love your child.** I promise, I will. I’m sure you hear this all the time—teachers don’t get into the field for the money. I got into teaching because of the joy of learning, the celebrations of childhood, and the professional journey along the way. When I go home at night, I cook dinner for my family, and my mind often drifts back to your child. I think about their mini successes and lose sleep over their struggles and failures. I approach each student like a puzzle, working to learn about every facet of their personality and learning profile until I fully understand who they are. I strive to know them as well as you do. I will share your love for your child, quirks included. Together, we can be the foundation and the ladders that they need to succeed this year.

When you have minute, please respond to this email with some information about your child as well as your hopes and dreams for them. I look forward to reviewing your insights together at our first parent-teacher conference in a few weeks.

Most importantly, I’m thrilled to be partnering with you this year.

With respect,

Ms. Carr